CLAIMS

Therefore, having thus described the invention, at least the following is claimed:

1. A method for controlling viewer access to media content, said method comprising the steps of:

providing interactive user interfaces on a screen that enables an administrator to positively define media content for access by a user; and

enabling the user to access the media content as defined by the administrator.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of enabling the administrator to define the scope of the media content the user can access.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing the administrator with a pre-configured list of selectable authorization levels that enable the administrator to categorize the user and the corresponding media content the user will have access to.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of providing the administrator with a pre-configured list of selectable authorization levels includes the step of providing the administrator with a screen for configuring personalized authorization levels.

5. The method of claim 3, further including the step of providing a personal identification number screen to enable the user to access the selectable user authorization level.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing a pre-configured list of selectable categories that enable the administrator to categorize when and which of the media content the user can access, wherein said list includes games, compact discs, digital video disks, software, movies, music, live programming, programming services, email, internet access, display channels, MPAA ratings, genre, time of access, media content instance titles, and subject matter.

7. The method of claim 6, further including the step of enabling the user access to the media content when no conflicts between the selectable categories exist.

8. The method of claim 7, further including the step of providing a warning barker if the conflicts arise.

9. The method of claim 1, further including the step of permanently recording the media content that the user has access to a personal video recording device, when the media content is presented in real-time during an interval of time that was not enabled by the administrator, for later access during an enabled interval of time.

10. The method of claim 1, further including the step of limiting the media content displayed on a screen display to the user to what the administrator has enabled the user to access.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing the administrator with a display of an interactive program guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing the administrator with a display of a video on demand catalog guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing the administrator with an icon that enables the administrator to select the media content instance for enabled access from a displayed presentation of the media content instance.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing selectable and personalized user authorization levels for a plurality of users.

15. The method of claim 14, further including the step of enabling the user to access the media content enabled in more than one of the authorization levels.

16. The method of claim 1, further including the step of enabling the user to access the media content located in a personal video recording device.

17. The method of claim 1, further including the step of causing the display of the user interfaces to time-out after a defined time period of administrator inactivity.

18. The method of claim 1, further including the step of providing a user interface display that provides the administrator with the ability to access content provider updates to the media content.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces further includes the step of enabling the administrator to exclude media content from access by the user.

20. The method of claim 19, further including the step of excluding from access by the user the media content that the administrator has excluded.

21. The method of claim 1, further including the step of providing a default viewing screen that presents a blank screen to the user until the media content is enabled for access by the administrator.

22. The method of claim 21, further including the step of providing a message overlaid on the default viewing screen instructing the user to contact the administrator for enabled access.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein the media content includes broadcast and on-demand media content.

24. A method for controlling viewer access to media content, said method comprising the steps of:

providing interactive user interfaces on a screen that enables an administrator to identify a media content instance among a plurality of media content instances to determine if the media content instance is suitable for viewing; and

enabling user access only to the media content instance that the administrator deems suitable for viewing.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing the administrator with a pre-configured list of selectable authorization levels that enable the administrator to categorize the user and the corresponding media content instances the user will have access to.

26. The method of claim 25, further including the step of providing a personal identification number screen to enable the user to access the selectable user authorization level.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein the step of providing the administrator with a pre-configured list of selectable authorization levels includes the step of providing the administrator with a screen for configuring personalized authorization levels.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing a pre-configured list of selectable categories that enable the administrator to categorize when and which of the media content instances the user can access, wherein said list includes games, compact discs, digital video disks, software, movies, music, live programming, programming services, email, internet access, display channels, MPAA ratings, genre, time of access, media content instance titles, and subject matter.

29. The method of claim 28, further including the step of enabling the user access to the media content instances when no conflicts between the selectable categories exist.

30. The method of claim 29, further including the step of providing a warning barker if the conflicts arise.

31. The method of claim 24, further including the step of permanently recording the media content instances to which the user has access to a personal video recording device, when the media content instances are presented in real-time during an interval of time that was not enabled by the administrator, for later access during an enabled interval of time.

32. The method of claim 24, further including the step of limiting the media content instances displayed on a screen display to the user to what the administrator has enabled the user to access.

33. The method of claim 24, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing the administrator with a display of an interactive program guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access.

34. The method of claim 24, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing the administrator with a display of a video on demand catalog guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access.

35. The method of claim 24, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing the administrator with an icon that enables the administrator to select the media content instance for enabled access from a displayed presentation of the media content instance.

36. The method of claim 24, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces includes the step of providing selectable and personalized user authorization levels for a plurality of users.

37. The method of claim 36, further including the step of enabling the user to access the media content instance enabled in more than one of the authorization levels.

38. The method of claim 24, further including the step of enabling the user to access a media content instance located in a personal video recording device.

39. The method of claim 24, further including the step of causing the display of the user interfaces to time-out after a defined time period of administrator inactivity.

40. The method of claim 24, further including the step of providing a user interface display that provides the administrator with the ability to access content provider updates to the media content instances.

41. The method of claim 24, wherein the step of providing interactive user interfaces further includes the step of enabling the administrator to exclude the media content instance from access by the user.

42. The method of claim 41, further including the step of excluding from access by the user the media content instance that the administrator has excluded.

43. The method of claim 24, further including the step of providing a default viewing screen that presents a blank screen to the user until the media content is enabled for access by the administrator.

44. The method of claim 43, further including the step of providing a message overlaid on the default viewing screen instructing the user to contact the administrator for enabled access.

45. The method of claim 24, wherein the media content instances includes broadcast and on-demand media content instances.

46. A method for controlling viewer access to media content, said method comprising the steps of:

providing interactive user interfaces on a screen that enables an administrator to positively define media content for access by a user, wherein the step of providing an interactive user interface comprises the step of enabling the administrator to define the scope of the media content the user can access, wherein the media content includes broadcast and on-demand media content;

providing the administrator with a pre-configured list of selectable authorization levels that enable the administrator to categorize the user and the corresponding media content the user will have access to;

providing a personal identification number screen to enable the user to access the selectable user authorization level;

providing the administrator with a screen for configuring personalized authorization levels;

providing a pre-configured list of selectable categories that enable the administrator to categorize when and which of the media content the user can access, wherein said list includes games, compact discs, digital video disks, software, movies, music, live programming, programming services, email, internet access, display channels, MPAA ratings, genre, time of access, media content instance titles, and subject matter;

enabling the user to access the media content as defined by the administrator;

enabling the user access to the media content when no conflicts between the selectable categories exist;

providing a warning barker when if the conflicts arise;

permanently recording the media content that the user has access to a personal video recording device, when the media content is presented in real-time during an interval of time that was not enabled by the administrator, for later access during an enabled interval of time;

limiting the media content displayed on a screen display to the user to what the administrator has enabled the user to access;

providing the administrator with a display of an interactive program guide from which the administrator can select a media content instance for enabled access;

providing the administrator with a display of a video on demand catalog guide from which the administrator can select a media content instance for enabled access;

providing the administrator with an icon that enables the administrator to select a media content instance for enabled access from a displayed presentation of the media content instance;

providing selectable and personalized user authorization levels for a plurality of users;

enabling the user to access the media content enabled in more than one of the authorization levels;

enabling the user to access the media content located in a personal video recording device;

causing the display of the user interfaces to time-out after a defined time period of administrator inactivity;

providing a user interface display that provides the administrator with the ability to access content provider updates to the media content;

providing an interactive user interface further comprises the step of enabling the administrator to exclude media content from access by the user;

excluding from access by the user the media content that the administrator has excluded; and

providing a default viewing screen that presents a blank screen to the user until media content is enabled for access by the administrator.

47. A system for controlling viewer access to media content, said system comprising:

a memory with logic; and

a processor configured with the logic to provide interactive user interfaces on a screen that enable an administrator to positively define media content for access by a user, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user to access the media content as defined by the administrator.

48. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the administrator to define the scope of the media content the user can access.

49. The system of claim 47, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a pre-configured list of selectable authorization levels that enable the administrator to categorize the user and the corresponding media content the user will have access to.

50. The system of claim 49, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to providing a personal identification number screen to enable the user to access the selectable user authorization level.

51. The system of claim 49, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a screen for configuring personalized authorization levels.

52. The system of claim 47, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a pre-configured list of selectable categories that enable the administrator to categorize when and which of the media content the user can access, wherein said list includes games, compact discs, digital video disks, software, movies, music, live programming, programming services, email, internet access, display channels, MPAA ratings, genre, time of access, media content instance titles, and subject matter.

53. The system of claim 52, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user access to the media content when no conflicts between the selectable categories exist.

54. The system of claim 53, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a warning barker if the conflicts arise.

55. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to permanently record the media content that the user has access to a personal video recording device, when the media content is presented in real-time during an interval of time that was not enabled by the administrator, for later access during an enabled interval of time.

56. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to limit the media content displayed on a screen display to the user to what the administrator has enabled the user to access.

57. The system of claim 47, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of an interactive program guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access.

58. The system of claim 47, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of a video on demand catalog guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access.

59. The system of claim 47, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a displayed presentation of the media content instance with an icon that enables the administrator to select a media content instance for enabled access. .

60. The system of claim 47, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of selectable and personalized user authorization levels for a plurality of users.

61. The system of claim 60, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user to access the media content enabled in more than one of the authorization levels.

62. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user to access media content located in a personal video recording device.

63. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor and the memory and the logic are located remotely from a media client device.

64. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor and the memory and the logic are located at a media client device.

65. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to cause the display of the user interfaces to time-out after a defined time period of administrator inactivity .

66. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a user interface display that provides the administrator with the ability to access content provider updates to the media content.

67. The system of claim 47, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display to exclude media content from access by the user.

68. The system of claim 67, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to exclude from access by the user the media content that the administrator has excluded.

69. The system of claim 47, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a default viewing screen that presents a blank screen to the user until the media content is enabled for access by the administrator.

70. The system of claim 69, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to providing a message overlaid on the default viewing screen instructing the user to contact the administrator for enabled access.

71. The system of claim 47, wherein the media content includes broadcast and on-demand media content.

72. A system for controlling viewer access to media content, said system comprising:

a memory with logic; and

a processor configured with the logic to provide interactive user interfaces on a screen that enable an administrator to identify a media content instance among a plurality of media content instances to determine if the media content instance is suitable for viewing,

wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable user access only to the media content instance that the administrator deems suitable for viewing.

73. The system of claim 72, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a pre-configured list of selectable authorization levels that enable the administrator to categorize the user and the corresponding media content instances the user will have access to.

74. The system of claim 73, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to providing a personal identification number screen to enable the user to access the selectable user authorization level.

75. The system of claim 73, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a screen for configuring personalized authorization levels.

76. The system of claim 72, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a pre-configured list of selectable categories that enable the administrator to categorize when and which of the media content instances the user can access, wherein said list includes games, compact discs, digital video disks, software, movies, music, live programming, programming services, email, internet access, display channels, MPAA ratings, genre, time of access, media content instance title, and subject matter.

77. The system of claim 76, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user access to the media content instances when no conflicts between the selectable categories exist.

78. The system of claim 77, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a warning barker if the conflicts arise.

79. The system of claim 72, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to permanently record the media content instances that the user has access to a personal video recording device, when the media content instance is presented in real-time during an interval of time that was not enabled by the administrator, for later access during an enabled interval of time.

80. The system of claim 72, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to limit the media content instances displayed on a screen display to the user to what the administrator has enabled the user to access.

81. The system of claim 72, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of an interactive program guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access.

82. The system of claim 72, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of a video on demand catalog guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access.

83. The system of claim 72, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a displayed presentation of the media content instance with an icon that enables the administrator to select the media content instance for enabled access.

84. The system of claim 72, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of selectable and personalized user authorization levels for a plurality of users.

85. The system of claim 84, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user to access the media content instance enabled in more than one of the authorization levels.

86. The system of claim 72, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user to access a media content instance located in a personal video recording device.

87. The system of claim 72, wherein the steps of providing and enabling occur for a plurality of media content instances.

88. The system of claim 72, wherein the processor and the memory and the logic are located remotely from a media client device.

89. The system of claim 72, wherein the processor and the memory and the logic are located at a media client device.

90. The system of claim 72, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to cause the display of the user interfaces to time-out after a defined time period of administrator inactivity.

91. The system of claim 72, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a user interface display that provides the administrator with the ability to access content provider updates to the media content instances.

92. The system of claim 72, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display to exclude media content from access by the user.

93. The system of claim 92, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to exclude from access by the user the media content that the administrator has excluded.

94. The system of claim 72, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a default viewing screen that presents a blank screen to the user until the media content is enabled for access by the administrator.

95. The system of claim 94, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to providing a message overlaid on the default viewing screen instructing the user to contact the administrator for enabled access.

96. The system of claim 72, wherein the media content includes broadcast and on-demand media content.

97. A system for controlling viewer access to media content, comprising:

a memory with logic; and

a processor configured with the logic to provide interactive user interfaces on a screen that enable an administrator to positively define media content for access by a user, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user to access the media content as defined by the administrator, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the administrator to define the scope of the media content the user can access, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a pre-configured list of selectable authorization levels that enable the administrator to categorize the user and the corresponding media content the user will have access to, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to providing a personal identification number screen to enable the user to access the selectable user authorization level, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a screen for configuring personalized authorization levels, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a pre-configured list of selectable categories that enable the administrator to categorize when and which of the media content the user can access, wherein said list includes games, compact discs, digital video disks, software, movies, music, live programming, programming services, email, internet access, display channels, MPAA ratings, genre, time of access, media content instance titles, and subject matter, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user access to the

media content when no conflicts between the selectable categories exist, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a warning barker if the conflicts arise, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to permanently record the media content that the user has access to a personal video recording device, when the media content is presented in real-time during an interval of time that was not enabled by the administrator, for later access during an enabled interval of time, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to limit the media content displayed on a screen display to the user to what the administrator has enabled the user to access, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of an interactive program guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of a video on demand catalog guide from which the administrator can select the media content instance for enabled access, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a displayed presentation of the media content instance with an icon that enables the administrator to select a media content instance for enabled access, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display of selectable and personalized user authorization levels for a plurality of users, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user to access the media content enabled in more than one of the authorization levels, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to enable the user to access media content located in a personal video recording device, wherein the processor and the memory and the logic are located at a media client device, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to cause the display of the user interfaces to time-out after a defined time period of administrator inactivity, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a user interface display that provides the administrator with the ability to access content provider updates to the media content, wherein the interactive user interfaces include a display to exclude media content from access by the user, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to exclude from access by the user the media content that the administrator has excluded, wherein the processor is further configured with the logic to provide a default viewing screen that presents a blank screen to the user until media content is enabled for access by the administrator, wherein the media content includes broadcast and on-demand media content.